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The background and characteristics of the Spanish speaking people of the Southwest are discussed. The Spanish speaking people are a heterogeneous group composed of Spanish-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Mexicans intermixed with Indians. The Southwest was settled by them during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; here they were isolated until the nineteenth century. A folk culture was developed then which is now being influenced by Anglo cultural elements of education, mobility, and urbanization. Spanish-speaking people are divided into strong class or status systems. These range from village lower class in which no or little English is spoken to upper class in which both English and Spanish are spoken. Acculturation has been slow because of voluntary and imposed segregation and because of cultural reinforcement from Mexico. A simple technology, subsistence economy with little importance placed upon work, slow rate of social change, small population aggregations, limited education, family solidarity, orientation toward the present time rather than the future, and individualism for personal worth rather than competitive gains characterize these people.							
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THE SPANISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE OF THE SOUTHWEST
by Lyle Saunders

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1. Heterogeneity of the group:

The Spanish-speaking population of the Southwest is not a homogeneous group but is made up of several sub-groups with somewhat differing biological and cultural characteristics. Among the more important of the sub-groups are: the Spanish-Americans, descendants of families that have lived in the Southwest for several hundred years; Mexican-Americans, native-born descendants of families who have migrated from Mexico, largely since 1910; and Mexicans, citizens of Mexico, many of whom have entered the United States illegally.

Biological differences among members of these three groups result from the continued intermixture with Indian groups that has been going on in Mexico since the Conquest, the endogamous nature of Spanish-American communities during the past 100 years, and the increasing intermarriage between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking (Anglos) that has been going on in the past 15 to 20 years.

Cultural differences result from variations in the amount of contact with Anglo culture; differences in class status of individuals or families; sub-cultural variations between urban and rural people--in short from the differing social experiences of the three groups. (The range of both cultural and biological variation within each group is greater than that between groups.)

The three groups might be characterized thus: Spanish-Americans have been largely a stable, land-owning people, until recently quite self reliant and self sufficient, who are now facing rapid social change and the resulting possibility of social and personal disorganization; Mexican-Americans, being first and second generation immigrants, are undergoing the unsettling transition from Mexican to American ways and values; the Mexicans are largely poor, landless males with few possessions, little education, few skills and almost no understanding of the United States and its ways.

It is virtually impossible to find a set of criteria for precisely defining members of the Spanish-speaking group; yet they are an easily distinguishable population whose physical and social characteristics set them apart and who tend to interact more with each other than the rest of the population.

2. Historical backgrounds:

Spanish-speaking people first came into the Southwest in the 16th century. In the latter part of that century and throughout the

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17th, settlements were established in the Rio Grande Valley north from El Paso to what is now southern Colorado. Settlements were of two kinds: isolated rancheros and haciendas (owned by a hacendado, staffed by soldier-citizens, and worked by peons) and village communities, clusters of several extended families supporting themselves by subsistence agriculture. Perhaps the most important factor in the history of these settlements was isolation; until the early 19th century they had almost no contact with the main stream of Western Civilization.

Outstanding events in the breakdown of isolation were: the coming of a small group of individual traders, trappers, mountain men in the period 1800-1830; the development of trade with the east and the opening of the Santa Fe trail, 1830-1860; the gold rush to California in the 1850's; the conquest of the area by the United States in 1846; the coming of the railroad, 1870-1880; a period of intensive homesteading by Anglos, 1910-1920; and the first World War, 1914-1918.

Among the effects of these events were: the introduction of a new type of government; a new legal system which enabled sharp dealing Anglos to acquire much land from the villagers; a new language, religion, technology; the introduction of wage work and a money economy; new psychological imperatives; the need to adjust to change, the appearance of competition and aggression, the expectation of individual responsibility.

Two main streams of change can be noted: the change from a rural-folk to an urban-industrial culture; and change in the direction of the adoption of specific Anglo cultural elements (e.g., the English language, Protestant religion, mechanized technology, democratic government, etc.)

A folk culture, such as the Spanish-Americans developed, has these characteristics which are almost exactly opposite those of an urban-industrial culture: small population aggregations in which typically everybody knows everybody else; a high degree of isolation from other cultures; communication by oral rather than by written symbols, with little communication of any kind outside the immediate group, a homogeneous population with but little division of labor; a slow rate of social change; a simple technology; economic independence and a subsistence economy; a strong sense of group identification; a predominance of sacred, as opposed to secular, symbols and sanctions. The attitudes, values, and character structure of members of the group reflect this folk background.

Recent events that have influenced the rate of social and cultural change among the Spanish-speaking have been: the depression of the 1930's which brought the first large scale governmental attempts to meet the problems of the Spanish-speaking and introduced a pattern of dependency on impersonal agencies to replace the older custom of patron dependency; the second World War which, through the draft and war work opportunities took many Spanish-Americans out of their villages; the G.I. Bill of Rights which enabled many Spanish-speaking men and women to attend college; urbanization, which is bringing Spanish-speaking

people, historically rural, into cities in ever increasing numbers; the invasion of hundreds of thousands of illegal wetbacks from Mexico whose presence tends to retard acculturation and to help perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and prejudices on the part of Anglos.

3. Numbers and distribution:

The 1950 Census tabulated about 2,300,000 Spanish-name persons in the five Southwestern states--11% of the total population. For a number of reasons this count is thought somewhat low. The highest numbers are in Texas (1,033,000); the smallest numerical group in Colorado (118,000). The highest proportion is in New Mexico (36.5% of the total population; the smallest in California (7.2%). The Texas, California, and Arizona populations are largely Mexican-Americans and Mexicans; those of Colorado and New Mexico are largely Spanish-Americans, although Colorado has a considerable number of Mexican-Americans and Mexicans among its migrant labor population. The Denver Spanish-speaking population is between 25,000 and 30,000, nearly all of whom are Spanish-American.

Population distribution is uneven. In some New Mexico and Texas counties, Spanish-name people make up 80-90% of the total population. In some counties there are none. Three counties (Texas and California) have over 100,000 each; three others have more than 50,000. In general, one can observe a gradual gradient of decrease in both numbers and proportions as one moves northward from border counties.

Demographic trends that can be noted include: increasing numbers as a result of both rapid natural increase and high immigration (largely illegal) from Mexico; a general northward movement of Spanish-speaking people out of border areas and their replacement by new migrants from Mexico; increasing urbanization. (Two-thirds of the total Spanish-name population of the Southwest now live in cities.)

4. Social characteristics:

Wherever they are found in the Southwest, the Spanish-speaking people, as a group, are characterized by: low incomes; limited education, with relatively few of the middle and older age adults having completed more than six years of school; a high proportion of workers in low paying, blind alley jobs; a higher death rate (especially among infants) and morbidity rate (at least for contagious and infectious diseases) than the population as a whole; segregated residential areas, and in some parts of the Southwest separate churches, business facilities, schools.

Other social characteristics include: an extended family system, with a strong sense of family solidarity (this breaks down rather rapidly in cities); a tendency towards marriage within the group; considerable physical mobility; restricted social mobility; Catholic religious faith; and a pervasive belief in witches and witchcraft.

After a century of contact with Anglo culture many of the traits of Spanish-speaking group persist. The rate of acculturation is slower than it might otherwise be because of both voluntary and imposed segregation (which limits opportunities for meaningful contacts between Anglos and the Spanish-speaking) and because of cultural reinforcement from Mexico.

5. Class variations within the Spanish-speaking group:

There are no good studies of the class status or characteristics of the Spanish-speaking. There are three status systems within which the Spanish-American group may move: the village status system; the system of Spanish-speaking people on a state or regional level; the Anglo system on a state or regional level. In general, a Spanish-American might be expected to lose from a half to a full class level as he moves outward from home village to Anglo city.

Among the differences which have been noted (mainly impressionistically) among the various class levels are:

Village lower class: pre-Anglo social system with large reliance on family, church, patron, community; little English spoken or known; poor economic status with adobe houses, small land holdings, unskilled occupations, much relief; older people illiterate, and children seldom going beyond elementary school; penitente religion; some suspicion of and hostility toward Anglos; tendency to live largely in and for the present.

Urban-suburban lower class (middle class of village): Catholic religion, with some penitente membership; participation in the values and customs of the old culture, but with some uneven acculturation; some English used outside the home; low income, unskilled work, high proportion of relief recipients; illiteracy among older people; children in school through elementary grades with some attending and finishing high school; envy and emulation of Anglos; resentment of felt lack of acceptance by Anglos; tendency to live largely in and for the present.

Urban-suburban lower-middle class (upper in village): religion Catholic, with rare protestants; extended family pattern still strong, but with some trend towards adoption of Anglo family pattern; English known, but not largely used in home; fairly good economic status; older people uneducated in formal sense, but children attend high school and sometimes college; admiration and emulation of Anglos; resentment of cultural barriers; some tendency towards glorification of "good old days".

Urban-suburban upper-middle class (upper in village): both Catholic and Protestant with some deliberate acceptance of Protestantism to be more like Anglos; social system a somewhat sophisticated mixture of both Spanish and Anglo elements, with young people generally accepting Anglo middle class ideals; language mainly English, but Spanish is known by adults; good economic status; fairly high educational level,

with frequent college attendance by young people; idealization and practice of Anglo traits, to extent that there exists an almost unbridgeable gap between this class and lower class Spanish-speaking; much more interaction with each other and with Anglos than with lower classes among Spanish-speaking; orientation to time, work, success not much different from that of Anglos.

Urban-suburban upper class: mainly Catholic; social system much like that of Anglos, but with emphasis on kinship relations within own group; some deliberate, sophisticated cultivating and preserving of Spanish cultural elements; language mainly English with Spanish known as a point of pride; very good economic status; high level of formal education; feelings of superiority towards Anglos, but much adoption of Anglo ways and values; some tendency to glorify the past.

Denver population is probably made up largely of urban-suburban lower and lower middle class members. There are relatively few of village lower class group; a thin layer of upper middle (very probably increasing in numbers); very few, if any, upper class.

6. Some value orientation patterns of the Spanish-speaking group: (these are group generalizations, that may or may not be seen in the behavior of a given individual).

Extended family group: "To be a Spanish-American is to be a brother". Family (and by extension community) membership is the basis for one's self identification. The family, not the individual, is the important unit, and individuals are expected to subordinate own interests to those of family. Family, on the other hand, is expected to be loyal and responsible for its members. Children are positively desired; attitudes towards them are warm, permissive, but children are never the center of attention. Sibling relationships are generally those of affection, companionship, interdependence; the absence of strong sibling rivalry has been commented on by several students of the group. In its external relationships the family is patriarchal, with females being expected to confine themselves to their traditional tasks of caring for the household, bearing and rearing children. In its internal relationships, the families are frequently mother-centered. Visiting and hospitality between relatives is very common; children are "loaned" to childless couples within the larger family group.

Sense of time: Anglos are oriented toward the future, Spanish-speaking toward the present. The clock and the calendar are not important gadgets for Spanish-speaking. In their culture major emphasis is on the present. The past is not venerated; the future is vaguely conceived, is sometimes a source of a generalized uneasiness. Activities are largely unplanned; gatherings of people tend to be spontaneous. The impulse of the moment is a strong determinant of behavior. That which is pleasant or necessary is done; that which is neither is put off. The difference in orientation to time leads many Anglos to characterize Spanish-speaking as irresponsible, lazy, undependable; it has been a barrier to the developing of sympathetic understanding between members of the two groups.

Sense of modesty: Generally speaking, Spanish-speaking persons are likely to be more sensitive to violations of modesty than are Anglos of comparable class levels. There may be reluctance to talk about bodily functions or organs in mixed groups, some reluctance to expose one's body even to persons of the same sex. Sex tends not to be a topic of conversation, except possibly among all-male groups in which there is boasting of sexual prowess or accomplishments. A physical examination may be a trying experience for a Spanish-speaking person, especially if performed by one of the opposite sex.

Individualism: Competitive individualism is highly valued by Anglos. There is competition for almost everything; there is insistence that the individual is largely responsible for his own destiny, for "getting ahead", for "making something of himself." The Spanish-speaking is also an individualist, but his tends to be an individualism of being rather than doing, of recognition of personal characteristics rather than of accomplishment. The Anglo takes pride in what he does; the Spanish-speaking in what he is.

Achievement and success: Laski: "Few Americans are happy unless they are doing something". The Anglo says, in effect: "Let's do something about it!"; the Spanish-speaking, "Let's accept it and adjust to it." The Anglo glorifies progress, believes it essential and inevitable; the Spanish-speaking person is more likely to be content with things as they are. The widely differing group attitudes are reflected in the relative emphasis on institutional and personal leadership in the two cultures; in the differing emphases on ascribed and achieved status; in the differing degrees to which group members feel impelled to make changes in their environment (in nearly two hundred years of isolation, there were almost no changes in the Spanish-American villages). Achievement and success are high Anglo values; they are much less highly valued among Spanish-speaking.

Activity and work: Anglos emphasize work, sometimes to the extent of seeming to advocate work for work's sake. They equate idleness and sinfulness. Employment has meaning beyond the economic return. For Anglos a satisfactory answer to the question: "Who is he?" is to tell what he does. The Spanish-speaking does not idealize work. For him it is a necessary evil, something to do because it has to be done, but something to get over with as quickly and pleasantly as possible. Idleness is not morally corrupting; the "job" does not rank high in the scale of values. Certainly one is not expected to structure his life around an occupation. Obligations to friends or family members may take precedence over obligations to an employer.

Efficiency and practicality: Both are emphasized by Anglos, sometimes to the point where they become ends in themselves. The Spanish-speaking value both fairly low. In Spanish-American villages in 150 years agricultural techniques changed scarcely at all. There was no drive for improvement, little or no questioning of whether or not methods were efficient. Practicality, of course, is related to other values: it is regarded as 'practical' by Anglos to "save for a

rainy day"; it is 'practical' for a Spanish-speaking family on relief to buy a big TV set so they can enjoy today.

Reliance on science and secular rationality: The generalized Anglo attitude has been well expressed by Clyde and Florence Kluckhohn: "Our glorification of science and our faith in what can be accomplished through education are two striking aspects of our generalized conviction that secular, humanistic effort will improve the world in a series of changes, all for the better." Applied science is highly valued in Anglo culture as a tool for controlling nature (and now, man) and science, which is rational, systematic, diligent, functional, efficient, fits in well with our other value orientations. The Spanish-speaking people are more likely to see themselves as victims or benefactors of forces that are supernatural, animistic, magical, whimsical, and quite beyond their power to control. Succinctly: Anglos tend to think, reason, control; the Spanish-speaking to feel, conform, accept.

Health and sickness: "Better health" for the individual or community is not a Spanish-speaking group concept. The Spanish-speaking person considers himself a whole person who does not have to improve himself in this respect. Illness and discomfort are a part of living; one accepts them as he accepts other unpleasant aspects of life. If they are minor, they can be ignored or complained about. If they are such as to interfere with normal activities family resources can be summoned for aid. The sick person does not withdraw from the group. Rather he is more closely surrounded by the group, who are obligated to help him and support him. Some illness can be caused by the malevolent powers of other persons; ritual precautions can sometimes prevent such harm. Harm comes from the physical world, from the unknown, from evil persons. It cannot come from one's relatives and friends. Surgery may cause irreparable damage: "An operation is as if you take a clay pot, drop it on the ground and crack it; you pick it up and patch it and you still have a pot, but one less useful than an undamaged one."

7. Personality characteristics: Gordon Hewes has made a composite listing of the characteristics of Mexicans as revealed in Mexican literature. Among the characteristics noted are these:

1. Deep feelings of inferiority or insufficiency--as reflected in cruelty to animals and inferiors, quick perception of insult, easily wounded pride, withdrawal from unpleasant or potentially damaging situations.
2. Individualism--an insistence on one's personal worth or competence; the lack of team spirit, inability to organize for promoting common ends.
3. Passivity, punctuated by violence or verbal outbursts. (Mexico has a very high homicide rate)
4. General irritability lightened by "occasional tenderness and delicacy".

5. Machismo, the need of males to maintain the fiction of enormous virility.
6. Preoccupation with violence and death, as reflected in realistic and gruesome detail in religious images, the celebrations of the Day of the Dead, fantasies of sainthood, the detail with which deaths and accidents are reported in newspapers, the elaboration of funeral rites, the popularity of bull fighting.
7. Religious ambivalence; religious apathy, skepticism, non-attendance in a country noted for the profusion of its churches.
8. Acceptance of a double standard of sexual morality, with sharply opposed codes of conduct for males and females.
9. Great concern with personal honor, manifest in extreme sensitivity to insult, the formalization of relationships, the elaborate use of titles and such conventions and handshaking, national chauvinism.
10. Micromania, reflected in a preoccupation with small art and handcraft objects, diminutives and superdiminutives in speech, liking for children and little animals.
11. Attitudes of fatalism and acceptance.
12. Imaginative vivacity, seen in exuberant architecture, a high level of artistic creativity.
- 13.. Sentimentality, introversion, indecision, vagueness in notions of time and space, inability to arrive at positive conclusions.

In relations between any Anglo and any Spanish-speaking person there may be cultural barriers to understanding and communication that operate to limit the effectiveness of the relationship for achieving whatever ends either of the actors has in mind. An awareness that these barriers may exist is a first step towards minimizing their influence. The purpose of this outline is to call attention to some of the areas where cultural differences may exist and to suggest by implications the desirability of making allowance for them when communication across cultural lines is attempted.